

HOLMFIRTH
URBAN DISTRICT.

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

FOR 1918.

I.—BIRTHS.

During the year 1918 the births of 123 infants were registered, 63 boys, 60 girls, making a birth-rate of 11.7 per thousand persons belonging to the district per annum, which is a very low rate. The birth-rate for England and Wales was 17.7. There were 22 more deaths than births.

II.—DEATHS.

The deaths of persons living in and belonging to the district, and excluding soldiers and sailors, numbered 145, 68 of whom were males and 77 females, making a death-rate of 15.5 per thousand of the estimated civilian population per annum, which is higher than that of the preceding year, when the rate was 14.6, and lower than the rate for the whole country, which was 17.6 per thousand. The increase was mostly due to influenza. If the deaths due to influenza and pneumonia were deducted, the rate would be only 12.1 per thousand.

As 10 infants died before reaching the age of twelve months, the infantile mortality rate was 81.3 per thousand births. The corresponding rate for the whole country was 97.

III.—DISEASE.

(a) The 145 deaths were certified as having been caused by the following diseases:—

Whooping Cough	2
Diphtheria and Croup	4
Bronchitis	9
Pneumonia	10
Influenza	22
Erysipelas	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	12
Tuberculous Meningitis	3
Other Tuberculous Diseases	3
Cancer	9
Organic Heart Disease	19
Other Respiratory Diseases	3
Diarrhoea	1
Nephritis and Bright's Disease	5
Congenital Debility, etc.	4
Violence	1
Other Defined Diseases	37

Total 145

From this list, it appears that deaths due to influenza and diseases of the respiratory system were excessive, while deaths due to diseases of the digestive system were very rare. Deaths due to tuberculosis were also excessive. The more defined causes of death in the cases of the ten infants were:—

Congenital Debility	4
Congenital Defects	2
Whooping Cough	1
Diarrhœa	1
Erysipelas	1
Convulsions	1

(b) I received 153 notifications of infectious disease, viz.:—

Measles	33
German Measles	1
Scarlet Fever	4
Diphtheria	83
Enteric or Typhoid Fever	1
Erysipelas	5
Ophthalmia Neuriatorum	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	18
Tuberculous Meningitis	3
Other forms of Tuberculosis	4
Total	153

One case of typhoid and two cases of scarlet fever and 65 cases of diphtheria were sent to the isolation hospital. Prompt removal to the hospital, the closure of schools, and the use of anti-diphtheritic serum merely checked and did stop this insidious disease, which is spread by mild, unrecognised cases and by "carriers," that is, people who retain the germs of the disease in their throats, although they may appear to be quite well.

As influenza is not notifiable, the severity of this serious epidemic can only be measured by the number of deaths. Probably this district suffered less than most other districts. The disease attacked people of all ages, but young and middle aged adults suffered most. The partial closure of schools and places of entertainment did not show any marked results, and the epidemics subsided here at the same time as they did elsewhere, and recurred again in the beginning of the present year.

IV.—SANITARY CONDITION.

Owing to the state of war and the scarcity of labour, very little progress has been made with public sanitary work, but four water closets and four privies have been constructed, and three privies have been rebuilt.

The Sanitary Inspector has made 1,378 inspections. He has issued 37 informal notices for the abatement of nuisances, and 26 have been complied with, and 18 statutory notices, of which nine have been complied with. He has fumigated and directed the cleansing of premises after notification of infectious disease, and after deaths or removal of cases of tuberculosis.

The serious pollution of the atmosphere by the clouds of black smoke that are almost continuously being poured out of some of the mill chimneys in the centre of the district has been brought to the notice of the Council, and I understand efforts are being made to secure the abatement of this intolerable nuisance.

The Inspector has made numerous inspections of houses, and has not found any actually unfit for habitation, but there are many defective houses.

Two cases of overcrowding have been reported, and there is a general scarcity of suitable houses in the central parts of the district.

The Council have bought land, presented plans and let contracts for the erection of a first lot of 12 houses, which will have three bedrooms and modern conveniences, and they have under consideration the erection of 25 more houses.

ALBERT THORP.

Holmfirth